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SOVIETS vs. DEMOCRACY

BY

C. M. OBEROUCHEFF

When and How the Soviets Were Organized

What the Provisional Government Did to Introduce Democracy

How the Coup D'état of November, 1917, Was Accomplished

Bolshevist Promises and Their Fulfillment

The Soviets, Their Rule and Constitution

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The Fundamental Causes of the Failure of the Soviet-Bolshevist Rule

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Introduction

The author of this pamphlet, General C. M. Oberoucheff, is an old Russian revolutionist, a prominent member of the Party of Socialists-Revolutionists.

In 1889, while a student at the Academy of Artillery, C. M. Oberoucheff was arrested for belonging to the Revolutionary Party "Narodnaya Volia" (The Will of the People) and confined to the famous Petropavlovsk Fortress. As a result of this arrest, the young military student was exiled to Turkestan. During the Revolution of 1905, C. M. Oberoucheff had another conflict with the Tzar's police, which brought about his retirement from active military service. In 1909, C. M. Oberoucheff faced court-martial for belonging to the Party of Socialists-Revolutionists. In 1913 he was exiled and from then on, up to February, 1917, he lived abroad.

In February, 1917, C. M. Oberoucheff returned to Russia desiring to serve the country under war conditions. He was arrested in Kiev, but in a few days the March Revolution set him free. The Executive Committee of the Council of Social Organizations of the city of Kiev elected him Military Commissary of Kiev. Later the Provisional Government, at the request of the Kiev Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates and upon the recommendation of General Brusilov, appointed him Military Commander of the Kiev District and promoted him from the rank of Colonel, which he had held in the Russian Army before his exile, to the rank of General.

At the end of September, 1917, due to a disagreement with the Ukrainian organizations with regard to the advisability of organizing a national Ukrainian Army, C. M. Oberoucheff resigned from his post and went to Scandinavia as the representative of the All-Russian Council of Peasants' Delegates to the International Conference dealing with the question of exchanging war prisoners. From Scandinavia, C. M. Oberoucheff came to the United States.

As an old democrat, who has devoted his entire life to the service of the people, C M. Oberoucheff discusses with authority the problem: "What are the Soviets?" And together with all the prominent Russian democrats, C. M. Oberoucheff answers that the so-called Soviet form of government is a new form of autocracy, the cruel rule of an insignificant minority over the majority. We are certain that the American readers will find General Oberoucheff's illuminating pamphlet of great interest.

A. J. SACK

*Director of the Russian Information
Bureau in the U. S.*

When and How the Soviets Were Organized

THE transition of power from the old regime in Petrograd to the Provisional Government was not accompanied by any violent eruption. The change of authority was accomplished quite peacefully, and life ran its normal course, save for the street manifestations and the universal display of infinite joy over the overthrow of the autocracy which the revolutionary democracy of Russia had fought so persistently and so long.

The entire governmental apparatus apparently continued to work as before. Yet, there was considerable apprehension that enemies of the new order were concealed within this administrative system, as the change of Government which took place in March was far from acceptable to the higher bureaucracy which had controlled Russia heretofore without restraint or check. The parliamentary organ of the last decade of the Tzar's rule, the lower chamber—the State Duma, had been elected on a non-democratic basis, by voters with property qualifications, and the upper chamber, the State Council, had been in part elected by certain privileged elements of the population and in part appointed by the Tzar from among old retiring bureaucrats and dignitaries who served largely as a deterrent factor and a drag in the enactment of reforms really useful to the people.

It was only too obvious that these organs of governmental legislative power, the State Council and the State Duma, could not be very well relied upon during the period of the Revolution, when all the props of the old regime were giving way, to serve as true exponents of the popular expectations and strivings and as fitting collaborators of the new rulers, regardless of the fact that the new regime itself had sprung, during the first hours of the Revolution, from the bosom of the State Duma.

The course of events soon dictated the necessity of creating in Petrograd a more democratic organ for collaboration with

the Provisional Government and for rendering it aid in the most important and very complex task of the building of new Russia. This new organ took shape in the Council (Soviet) of Workmen's Deputies of Petrograd, which was organized immediately, in fact earlier even, in order of time, than the complete formation of the Provisional Government itself. The members of this Council of Deputies were representatives of workshops and factories in Petrograd and vicinity elected at casual meetings, and also representatives of the revolutionary democracy, the most prominent and best-known revolutionists who happened to be at that time in Petrograd. The Petrograd Council of Workmen's Deputies had among its presidium the members of the State Duma, Tscheidze and Kerensky. Kerensky entered the Provisional Government from this Soviet. Later he reported about his step to the Soviet and received its approval.

These were the circumstances that attended the birth of the Soviet in Petrograd in the early days of the March Revolution. In the provinces the Soviets of Workmen's Deputies were formed almost as soon. The fact is that when the news of the change was received, the governmental authorities in the provinces, the Governors and the smaller administrators, not being able to judge how stable the new Government was going to be, were utterly confused and did not know how to act. The local organs of self-government, the Municipal Councils and the Zemstvo institutions which were functioning during the Tzarist regime, were far from democratic bodies. These Municipal Councils and Zemstvos were chosen by qualified suffrage and were composed of houseowners and the bourgeoisie in the cities, and large property owners, landlords and manufacturers in the country Zemstvos. The workmen were not represented at all in the Municipal Councils, and the peasants were only represented in the Zemstvos in a limited way. Quite naturally, these institutions could not command the confidence of the great masses of the people.

The confusion among the old Government authorities, on the one hand, and the lack of confidence in the organs of self-government, on the other, forced the population, in the early

days of the Revolution, to seek for a form of local government which would provide a maximum of democracy and retain the confidence of the people. In response to this desire, Soviets of Workmen's Deputies began to form in the provinces—of course, not on the basis of universal, direct, secret and equal voting, but through open and spontaneous meetings at workshops and factories, with the participation of invited political and revolutionary leaders of all shades of opinion.

Along with these workmen's organizations there came into being during those early days, Councils of Soldiers' Deputies, rather unconventional political organs, as the army is generally supposed to be outside of politics. But owing to the fact that the Revolution had occurred at a time when a considerable part of the male population of the country was under arms, and likewise to the complete and violent overturn of all former precepts and conventions by the Revolution, the standards of the past could not serve as a proper gauge for the valuation of all the events of those days.

However, Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies were organized everywhere. In some places these deputies were elected at promiscuous street meetings of separate soldiers' groups; in other, as among the troops of the Kiev district, they were elected at meetings of soldiers and officers of regular army detachments, in accordance with rules issued by the army commander of the district in the first days of the Revolution. In most places these Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies were amalgamated with the Workmen's Soviets and formed, as in Petrograd and other cities, Soviets of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies. In other places, as in Kiev, the Soldiers' Councils were apart from the Workers' Soviets, though they worked jointly and in harmony.

Some military commanders made an attempt to bring the Soldiers' Councils into defined, legalized channels and to methodize the election of the Soviet representatives by specific regulations. Such were the orders of General Brusilov, Commander-in-Chief of the Southwestern Front; of General Alexeiev, the Supreme Commander of all the armed forces, and A. I. Gutchkov, the Minister of War. But these attempts

failed, first, because these orders lacked uniformity and served therefore to create confusion, and, principally, because there was no possibility of shaping events in a legal fashion during the first period of the Revolution.

Among the local Workmen's and Soldiers' Soviets, the one in Petrograd occupied a distinctly individual position. This Soviet, aside from regulating and steering the tendencies of the political and economic life in Petrograd and vicinity, assumed other general functions, namely, that of a consultative organ cooperating with the Provisional Government. This somewhat unusual position of the Petrograd Soviet,—in view of the fact that it was a local organization and could not reflect the wants and aspirations of the entire revolutionary democracy of all Russia,—began to appear anomalous, and, indeed, when the organization of local Soviets all over the country was accomplished, there appeared an insistent demand for the calling of a congress of representatives of Soviets from all over Russia for the purpose of creating a central organ.

In March, 1917, the first Congress of Soviets convened in Petrograd, at which, after long and heated debates, the Central Executive Committee of the Workmen's and Soldiers' Soviets was formed. The function of a central organ heretofore assumed by the Petrograd Soviet, ostensibly came to an end, and was transferred to this Central Executive Committee. But the Petrograd Soviet, as we shall see later, was not always satisfied with the modest role of a local Soviet, limited to local affairs. It retained the ambition to play the directing part not only in local but also in general national affairs, in direct competition with the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets. Somewhat later, but also in the course of extemporaneous revolutionary activity, there were formed, first, local, and later, territorial Soviets of Peasants' Deputies. A congress of delegates subsequently elected a Central Executive Committee of these Soviets of Peasants' Deputies, with headquarters in Petrograd, which functioned independently though in steady contact with the Central Executive Committee of the Workmen's and Soldiers' Soviets. This completed the construction of the

Soviet edifice and crowned it with a superstructure of two central executive bodies.

The elections to these Councils were not definitely regulated and their representation could not be, therefore, termed truly democratic, nor did they reflect the will of the Russian people in their entirety. They were, nevertheless, of a more democratic construction than the elective organs that new Russia had inherited from the old regime.

The circumstance that these first Soviets, though not in a perfect way, were elected during a period of a general and unusual elation of spirits and jubilation, when the customary Russian inter-party squabbles and fights had ceased for a while, had its influence upon the character of these Soviets, and these first bodies were, in the majority of cases, non-party, and I may even say, non-class organs. I make this last assertion because both in the Workmen's and Peasants' Soviets there were present, aside from workmen and peasants, also delegates from various party organizations, who came largely from the ranks of the non-class intellectuals, the men and women who had struggled so fervently with the Tzar's Government for the freedom of the people and who had earned and held the confidence of the people. The inclusion of representatives from the Army, i. e., the Soldiers' Deputies, also had the significance of giving to these Soviets less of a class character. The soldiers belonged to all classes.

These organizations were thus performing their functions in a more or less satisfactory degree, occasionally assisting the Provisional Government in realizing its program of building up a new order in Russia. True, our ingrained distrust for any form of authority, the result of centuries of Tzarist oppression, had the effect upon these Soviets that they ultimately became more and more diverted from the path of collaboration with the Provisional Government and endeavored to assume control and to block its work instead of rendering it aid. But it is quite definite that in their earlier stages the Soviets were a help and support to the first Government of the Revolution.

What the Provisional Government Did to Introduce Democracy

THE Provisional Government, after it had assumed power, did not decide to immediately introduce cardinal changes and reforms in Russian life.

This policy of the Government was not prompted by the presumption that these reforms were not imperative or desirable, or by the thought that it was advisable to leave things status quo, but was adopted solely because most of its members deemed it vital to leave the solution of these complex problems to the people themselves, through a freely elected Constituent Assembly which alone could express and afterwards realize the will of the people. Generations of Russian revolutionists had fought with the irresponsible rule of the Tzars for the ideal of a Constituent Assembly and their bones had whitened the road from Autocracy to Popular Government.

Yet, if the Provisional Government, which found itself at the helm of power by a sudden turn of fate, could not decide upon the introduction of wide social reform, it must not be assumed that it did nothing but await with folded arms the summoning of the Constituent Assembly. On the other hand, it accomplished an enormous amount, and most significant work, in spite of all obstacles placed in its way, first, stealthily, but later in a more and more vociferous and persistent manner, by those who cared more than anything else about the "deepening" of the Revolution, i. e., about destructive instead of constructive work.

To begin with, it must be stated that the Provisional Government signalled its entrance into power by proclaiming amnesty to all political prisoners of the old regime, without exception. The gates of the prisons were thrown wide open, and Russia's best men and women, who had been held captive for years in jails, exiled, or kept at work at hard labor, were freed from confinement. Aside from that, the various peoples of Russia

have under centuries of oppression never known the meaning of political freedom in the slightest degree. The Provisional Government liberated, in the very first days of its rule, the thought and speech of man and woman from the shackles that bound them during the Tzarist days. This Government established complete freedom of speech, press, assembly and association in as true, full and unabridged a form as was ever realized in any land.

Moreover, the Provisional Government upon many occasions when practical expediency demanded a partial curtailment of these liberties, refused to act drastically. It had faith in the educational importance of freedom, and would not recede from its position. To-day the Provisional Government is being condemned by many for this policy, and is being accused of weakness and vacillation. But this is not quite true. The refusal to apply punitive measures to those who misused these liberties to the detriment of others, was not so much a sign of weakness,—particularly in these early days,—as it was a conscious policy of conservation of freedom, a result of the sincere conviction that freedom is the best teacher even for such citizens who have yet to learn its usages.

Thus among the first gains of the Revolution we must put down absolute political and religious liberty, to the achievement of which the Provisional Government contributed so much. The political education and the instruction of the masses, heretofore practically illiterate and removed from every source of knowledge, was one of the first problems to hold the attention of the Provisional Government. As a result followed the extensive development of publishing enterprises, a wide organization of Sunday instruction courses, and the institution of various agencies for popular education.

Our narrative of the activities of the Provisional Government would fall short if we were to state that its care extended only to the realization of political liberties. The Government undertook important steps in the economic domain as well, even though it would not risk introducing social experiments and reforms without the sanction of the Constituent Assembly. It shortened the workday to eight hours; it passed a law creating

factory commissions, which, as representative organs of the workers of each factory, participated in the administration and control of the factory or workshop. The wide development of the trade union movement, always oppressed under the Tzars, was also due not solely to the initiative of the workers, but to a considerable degree to the sympathy and cooperation of the Provisional Government, particularly of the Ministry of Labor, with Socialist Ministers at the head of it.

The Cooperative Movement, in the form of productive, credit and consumers' organizations, conceived as an antidote to the oppressive burdens of capitalistic and trading exploitation, was developed on a wide scale in Russia even under the Tzarist regime. In January, 1912, there were in Russia over 10,000,000 members of cooperative societies, and, computing at the rate of five persons to each family, we may readily see that the Cooperative Movement of Russia held in its ranks over 50,000,000 persons, almost a third of the entire population. In spite of this wide development the Tzarist Government had placed a number of obstacles in its way. One of the chief hindrances preventing the Russian cooperatives from benefiting to a greater degree from their extensive development was the very stringent regulations, if not complete prohibition, governing the unification of these cooperatives upon a national basis.

To be sure, there were in Russia a few centrally united cooperatives. But these embraced only credit and some productive cooperative organizations. The most democratic and popular form of the cooperatives, the consumers' societies, which affected every member directly as a consumer, had only, at the time of the downfall of the old regime, three such national unions, in Moscow, Poland and Finland. After the Revolution the Provisional Government at once drew attention to the necessity of removing every obstacle from the path of creating national unions in every cooperative field. The rapid development of centralized activity in the Cooperative Movement owes its start to the policy of the Provisional Government.

The Provisional Government took a number of serious steps in the direction of alleviating the wants of the peasant masses

and laid the ground for a permanent solution of the land problem by the Constituent Assembly. For reasons already mentioned, the Provisional Government would not undertake to decide definitely upon far-reaching national economic questions, but it organized Land Commissions, under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture, to set the valuation and to take stock of the large estates in Russia in order to facilitate their transfer to the people, should the Constituent Assembly decide upon such a step; it put a stop to the buying and selling of lands and prohibited all land transactions whatever, pending final decision; and through the Ministry of Agriculture it prepared a plan for the nationalization of the land to be presented to the Constituent Assembly,—all measures animated by a desire to meet in the speediest and most practical way the hopes and expectations of the Russian peasantry.

Thus, it can readily be seen that the Provisional Government did not remain at all indifferent to the wants of the working masses of Russia. If it did not accomplish more than it did, it was primarily due to the fact that it was met at every step with the distrust and harassing of those who undertook to “deepen the Revolution,” and also because it was animated by a profound respect for the will of the people,—a will that was to be expressed only through the medium of a freely elected Constituent Assembly. Having undertaken the task of governing Russia during the period of a distressing foreign war, when the national economy had been systematically destroyed by the autocracy and the protracted hostilities, the Provisional Government decided to govern the country on the principles of right as opposed to might, and to ameliorate, as far as possible, the unbearable economic conditions created by the preceding regime. At the same time, it decided not to withdraw Russia from the coalition of the Powers that were fighting German militarism, in order that young, democratic Russia might be enabled to cast her influence on the side of all the oppressed and downtrodden. Such were the complex problems facing the Provisional Government immediately after the trend of historic events cast upon it the heavy burden of government.

14 *What the Provisional Government Did to Introduce Democracy*

As we have already said, the principal problem of the Provisional Government was to bring Russia to the opening of the Constituent Assembly. It was imperatively necessary, therefore, to create in the various localities of the country the machinery that would insure freedom of elections and an honest registration of the will of the people. Therefore, with this aim in view, and likewise for the purpose of creating genuine democratic local organs to supervise the economic conditions of the country, the Provisional Government decided to organize the Municipal and Zemstvo self-government bodies on the basis of universal suffrage. A law to this effect, enacted on May 17, 1917, provided for local elections by a universal, secret, direct and equal vote, with a proviso for minority representation and the extension of the vote to women. The existing local bodies, the old Municipal Councils and Zemstvos, and the Soviets, were charged to elect the new institutions within a period of from two to three weeks.

Of course, the time for these elections was very inadequate. In fact, it was hardly long enough to prepare the voters' lists, inasmuch as the vote in the cities was extended not only to the permanent inhabitants but to transient citizens, including members of the military detachments temporarily stationed in the various parts of the country. This called forth a flood of protesting telegrams to Petrograd, principally from the Soviets of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies. In these telegrams more time was demanded for the preparatory work of the elections in order to enable the people, in their first electoral campaign, to conduct a broad and wide discussion of all vital matters and interests involved in the elections. The Provisional Government complied with the requests and extended the time for elections. During the entire summer of 1917 a heated campaign for elections to the Municipal and Zemstvo institutions was in progress all over Russia. The elections were conducted under the joint supervision of all local Soviets, Dumas, political parties and trades' organizations, which insured the full freedom and the regularity of the balloting. When considered that the enthusiasm among the electors was such that from 80% to 90% (and in places even 100%) of the population took part in the voting,

it may become clear how truly democratic and popular these elections for the local institutions were and how fully they reflected the will of the people in all parts of Russia.

Towards September, 1917, all these new local institutions had been elected throughout Russia. As noted above, the creation of these bodies was designed to insure the regularity of the coming elections to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, but aside from that, they were equally important as the first truly democratic organs of local administration, political and economic, elected by the entire people.

From the hour of their creation all the Soviets that were called into being during the early processes of the Revolution, to supplant or to aid the old limited-suffrage Dumas and Zemstvos, were to give way to these new full-suffrage local organs and to confine themselves to trades-union functions or to work of a strictly professional character.

Such was not the case, however. The Bolsheviki had by that time begun the fight for power, and their adopted slogan, "All power to the Soviets!" began to be heard with more and more frequency. This marked the opening chapter in the tragedy of Russia's life, which replaced the beautiful first period of the Russian Revolution when not only the dawn of a new life was breaking over our Motherland, but the bright sun of true freedom was beginning to shed its rays through the fast disappearing clouds.

How the Coup D'état of November, 1917, Was Accomplished

WE have already seen that there existed in Petrograd, since the very beginning of the Revolution, a local Soviet of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies and also two Central Executive Committees, one of the Workmen's and Soldiers' Soviets and one of the Peasants' Soviets. These Central Executive Committees, elected by the revolutionary democracy of all Russia during the days when party divisions were not quite as sharply defined as they were later, were more stable and politically ripe in their make-up than the local Soviets with their flowing and constantly changing personnel.

Gradually, under the influence of the unrestrained and brazen agitation conducted by local and, principally, out-of-town Bolsheviks, the Petrograd Soviet began to incline more and more to Bolshevism. In September, 1917, just when in all the cities and provinces of Russia the new democratic Zemstvos and Dumas had been elected and the role of the Soviets was practically coming to an end, the shouting of the slogan "All power to the Soviets! Down with the Provisional Government!" was becoming more and more loud and persistent. It was then that the question of the overthrow of the Provisional Government and the capture of power by the Soviets was raised and decided in the affirmative. True, the resolution to this effect adopted by the Petrograd Soviet was rejected with a protest by the two Central Executive Committees of the Workmen's and Soldiers' and of the Peasants' Soviets. In other words, the representatives of the revolutionary and socialist democracy of all Russia protested against this overthrow of the Government planned by the Petrograd Soviet, and this protest was voiced principally because this nefarious plan was being hatched just at the time when the Provisional Government had made all preparations for the elections to the Constituent Assembly and had, in fact, set the time for the elections and likewise the date

for the convocation of the Constituent Assembly—December 11, 1917.

But the coup was nevertheless accomplished by a minority, against the definite and clearly expressed will of the majority of the people. The leaders of the overturn, however, wanted to give it the appearance of a popular revolt and the consummation of the will of the masses, in spite of the fact that it was carried out by a comparatively small number of people. In justice to the Bolsheviki it must be stated that they are past masters in the art of staging "popular" revolts, and, true to form, they carried out their last plan and struck notes and chords upon the mass-sentiment with perfection. They first turned their attention to the soldiers, in those days a large part of the population and the mainstay in the defense against Germany. The Bolsheviki knew well that great numbers of these soldiers wanted to see an end to the War and to return to their homes and fields. This sentiment was the result not only of the artful persistent agitation conducted by the Bolsheviki at the front and the rear, but was likewise due to the general weariness and the disorganization of our Army, and its poor supply service, inherited from the old regime. The Bolsheviki unhesitatingly took advantage of this elemental, demoralized state of mind and told the soldiers:

"The Provisional Government is deceiving you. It is continuing this war not in the interests of the war-worn peoples of Russia, but solely for the domestic and foreign capitalists. We will conclude an immediate peace and life will be peaceful and untroubled."

"Scatter, comrades, to your homes!" the call sounded to the soldiers, accompanied by a sinister nod in the direction of the officers, as if to insinuate that they were the only ones in the Army who favored the continuation of the war and that, in common with the bourgeoisie, they were gaining material advantages from it.

Thus the homeward drift from the front and the rear started, and the Army began to melt away. It was not, of course, accomplished at one stroke, as there were men in the

ranks who could not reconcile their consciences to such a dishonorable ending of the war, and who attempted to convince others of the madness and danger involved in this destruction of the Russian Army. But the deed was done, and the hearts of the masses of the soldiery were for the time swayed by the Bolsheviks to their side. Gradually the Army ceased to exist and the systematic killing off of the officers, as the enemies of the people, kept pace with it. The Bolsheviks were beginning to claim that the Army was with **them**.

But no matter how important the Army and its bayonets were for the usurpers, they could not limit themselves to agitation at the front and the rear. They were compelled to manifest a show of friendliness to the other strata of the population, to those who wore no soldiers' uniforms and carried no rifles, but who, nevertheless, were the majority of the population. So they began to cast coveting eyes upon the peasantry of Russia.

The idea that the land must eventually revert to the people was, from time immemorial, the fond dream of the Russian peasantry, and the revolutionary democracy of Russia was giving this problem long and earnest consideration and was endeavoring to solve it in the most equitable manner, in the common interest of the entire population. In brief, this problem had ripened to the stage of general agreement on the point that the land must be transferred to the peasants on the basis that those who till it shall own it. The Provisional Government had given very serious thought and attention to this problem and had prepared, as indicated above, a law-project for the favorable solution of it by the Constituent Assembly.

The Provisional Government would not, however, undertake to put the land reform in practice without the sanction of the Constituent Assembly. The Bolsheviks took advantage of this position and proclaimed the land popular property. As the preparation of a plan for the administration of the lands and their distribution among the population for rational use was a complex task and required a great deal of time, the Bolsheviks solved it with remarkable "speed and simplicity." I will refrain

from a personal characterization of their methods and will content myself with the brief summary of their newly-baked apologist and erstwhile opponent, Professor Lomonosov. At a meeting in Madison Square Garden, he thus defined the method the Bolsheviks used to solve the land problem:

"The Bolsheviks came and said: 'Take it all, at once!'"

The masses of people, who had only recently heard from the Provisional Government such words as: "Wait, the Constituent Assembly will convene and will solve, among other vital problems, the land question," concluded that in the Bolsheviks they had found true and warm defenders of their pressing interests, for, did not their declarations meet the burning desires of the day and contain the promise of immediate satisfaction? Of course, there were among the Russian peasantry many who doubted that the complex land problem could be solved by the simple method of land-grabbing. Yet, as Professor Lomonosov assures us, the peasants went with the Bolsheviks. We shall not enter into a discussion of this assertion, but one thing is quite certain, and that is that the minds of many of the peasants became temporarily inclined toward the men who made them these alluring promises.

But the Bolsheviks, who were preaching the gospel of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," i. e., the transfer of all power in the land to a comparatively small group of the Russian population, the group that could be justly termed the "proletariat," could not very well fail to make special promises and bestow special favors upon this group. For these, therefore, for the city workers, the Bolsheviks proposed workers' control over the factories, which, in the happy expression of Professor Lomonosov, was likewise voiced in the call: "Grab all, at once!" Lenin voiced his approval in the order: "Rob the robbers!"

Thus the soldiers, workmen and peasants were won over by the Bolsheviks,—at least, in the sense that they were to a certain degree devitalized as an opposing force to the usurpation of power by these brand-new benefactors of the people. There were still, however, some obstacles to be overcome. There were still some elements in Russia to whom the Bolsheviks slo-

gans may have appeared very alluring, yet impossible of realization unless sanctioned by the will of the whole people. Generations of Russian revolutionists had dreamt of such a manifestation of the will of the people and had fought the autocracy in the name of a Constituent Assembly, and in the minds and hearts of a great many only such an assembly was deemed capable of solving the complex problems of the national life. The Provisional Government, in fact, was basing its entire existence upon the summoning of a Constituent Assembly, and it appeared quite unseemly to oppose a Government that was supporting it and go over to the cause of a single group, no matter how alluring their promises were. The Bolsheviki understood this situation perfectly well when they were preparing their campaign against the Provisional Government. They did not fail to take advantage of the fact that the Provisional Government was compelled, owing to technical reasons, to change the date first set for the convocation of the Assembly, in September, for a later date. They at once declared: "The Provisional Government is hesitating to call the Constituent Assembly because it is afraid of the will of the people. We, on the other hand, are striving to call together the Constituent Assembly at once."

In this manner a great many of those who justly saw in the Constituent Assembly the panacea for most of the ills afflicting the people of Russia, began to trust them and were won over by these generous dispensers of promises. Still, there were others in Russia who stood for the defense of their native land against the aggressive invasion of the Germans, and their number was large, indeed. So the Bolsheviki did not forget these either, once they had made their decision to draw to themselves, even though for a time, the sympathies of the masses and to demonstrate that the entire people was with them. They utilized the discussion, in October, of the plan suggested by the Provisional Government to transfer the Capital from Petrograd to Moscow, and they vociferously and unequivocally declared:

"The Provisional Government is taking steps to run away to Moscow. They want to surrender Petrograd to the Ger-

mans. We will not give up Petrograd to the Germans under any condition. We will defend it to the last drop of blood, and we call upon you to defend it!" Thus were attracted to them even those whom they had only recently mockingly called "patriots," and the minds of those who earnestly sought a way out of the perilous situation at the front were deeply confused by these pronouncements of the power-hungry Bolsheviki.

This shower of promises scattered promiscuously in all directions and calculated to reach all the elements of the population succeeded in attracting to them the great masses of the people, which, even though not yet ready to take up a fight for the new authorities, were becoming indifferent to the old rule, the Provisional Government created by the March Revolution, and this, in turn, insured the ostensible recognition of the new rule by the rank and file of the people of Russia.

Bolshevist Promises and Their Fulfillment

I HAVE related above by what promises the Bolsheviki succeeded in inclining to their side, at least temporarily, before the coup d'état was accomplished, the sympathies of the various elements of Russia's population. We shall now see how the Bolsheviki kept their promises.

The first promise was to conclude peace, i. e., to make it possible for all the soldiers to return to their homes and to emerge from the reign of blood to a reign of tranquillity and normal working life. To begin with, the coveted peace did not materialize, for the War went on and the Germans were gradually penetrating deeper and deeper into Russia, maltreating the people and shedding the blood of the soldiers and inhabitants. But this was not all. Having discovered the danger to the national life of Russia threatened by the rule of the Bolsheviki, several parts of Russia, not yet fully conquered by the allurements of Bolshevism, decided to separate themselves temporarily from those sections which were completely under the yoke of the latter. Thereupon, the Bolsheviki, the same "friends" who had so loudly proclaimed the captivating slogans of freedom and national self-determination, decided as soon as they observed that this self-determination was not working out quite in accord with their precepts, to oppose the will of these peoples and declared war upon them.

All during the period that preceded the coup the Bolsheviki had persistently preached to the soldiers that the Russian workmen and peasant must not shoot or stab the German soldiers-proletarians. After they had gained power, however, they led these same soldiers, those who did not have time to run away, (or those who had no place to go to, as their homes were occupied by the invading Germans), to shoot and bayonet the workmen and the peasants of the Ukraine, Don, Kuban and other regions, and instead of the Russian-German front there have

sprung up all over Russia a number of fighting lines where blood runs in rivers and where in a fratricidal war the peoples of Russia are exterminating each other, *in order to facilitate for the Germans their ultimate aim—the conquest of the entire world.*

It is true that this war on the Ukraine, Don, Kuban, Caucasus and Siberian fronts the Bolsheviki choose to term a civil war. Mr. Lenine, at the third Soviet Congress, quite definitely stated that only the Bolsheviki have dared loudly and distinctly to advance the plan of a civil war and to execute it. We shall not quibble about words. Let them call this blood-shedding of the people "civil war." Though we know that this war on all the new fronts is conducted by the Bolsheviki for the conquest of various provinces and nationalities of Russia, we are not inclined to quarrel about terms. The essential fact, however, remains that the people's blood is being poured out with the same intensity as on the old Russian-German front, and the masses are still further away to-day from peaceful, productive labor and the upbuilding of a new life than what they were before the Bolsheviki had made their promises to them.

True, the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty was signed on behalf of Russia by some persons who pretended to represent Russia, but this treaty was never recognized by the nation, and the country, though resisting only passively, continued to be on a war footing with the Central Powers. Instead of forcing Germany, by the combined efforts of all the Allies, to recede from her annexationist plans, the Bolsheviki, by their promises of peace and the demoralization of the front, weakened the Allies, and in place of peace gave the peoples of Russia and all others a protracted and bloody war.

This is how the peace promise was fulfilled.

Next came the promise of land. The land problem was solved by the Bolsheviki, as stated already, in the simplest manner. In accordance with their directions, "Grab all, at once!" the peasant masses attacked the landowners' holdings, live stock and personal property and divided it among themselves. Who got the lion's share in this free-for-all affair?

Well, of course, those who commanded more force at the outset. They would drive up to the estates in wagons, would confiscate the foodstuffs, household and other goods and take it away with them, and, quite naturally whoever had more horses and wagons to load up would get away with more things. The poor, who had no horses or wagons, could only take along as much as they could carry in their bare hands. As for the soil, the division was also conducted on the same lines: the more powerful among the peasants would receive a more generous slice. Aside from this, large masses of peasant-folk were not on the spot at the time of the division, as they were still on the way from the front and could not take part in it. The partly neglected and grabbed-up land, therefore, very seldom fell into the hands of those peasants who needed it most.

As a result of it, we observe that in such a fertile region—the granary of Russia—as the Volga Provinces, half of the arable lands remained uncultivated in the summer of 1918, for the sole reason that the better developed homesteads were destroyed, the harvesting implements partly ruined and partly stolen, and frequently because the casual “owner” of the confiscated land was not altogether certain that under the unstable conditions of the country, he, the tiller of the soil, would be the one to gather in the crop. Aside from that, the abstention from cultivation was influenced considerably by the fact that the very method of land acquisition based upon the principle of “grab all, at once,” did not quite appeal to all the inhabitants of the Russian village as the most rational and legitimate method. In consequence, engrossed in meditation and far from certain that the change that took place will rebound to the best interests of the people, our people are still facing the land question.

Without a well thought-out and planned program for the utilization and distribution of lands, such a solution of the land problem as was fostered by the new rulers of Russia could not, of course, satisfy the masses of the people. True, Lenine himself is effervescing with joy at the “creative” work of the present-day village. At the Soviet Congress he said, brimful with happiness: “To those who claim that we have accomplished

nothing, that we spend our time in inactivity, that the reign of the Soviet rule is fruitless, we only want to say: Look at the very depths of the toiling people, into the core of the dense masses! There you can see a never-ceasing creative organizing activity; there springs forth a new life enlightened by the revolution.' In the villages the peasants are taking the lands, the workers are appropriating the factories and all manner of organizations are appearing everywhere!"

Such is this "construction" of a new life! Unfortunately, these "takings" and "appropriations" are a long way from constructive work, and the people are already beginning to learn that they have been led into the wrong course, a course that does not add to the common weal and happiness. Through their "solution" of the land problem the Bolsheviki have led the people into a stupefying mess from which the peasants can extricate themselves only with extreme difficulty and after a terrible internecine struggle, instead of the Socialist millennium promised them.

What about the "workmen's control" which attracted to the Bolsheviki the support of so many workers?

Every Socialist recognizes the necessity of control of industry, the necessity of controlling it to the extent that the owners of capital are deprived of the possibility and right to receive super-profits and also for the sake of insuring industry against crises through the regulation of production. Such a control, however, must be the task of the governmental authority, of the center of power, where all information about the conditions of industry is concentrated and where the national demands which industry is called upon to supply may be ascertained. This control is, therefore, a complex governmental apparatus by necessity, yet the Bolsheviki thought it feasible to substitute for it the simple "method" of turning over to the control of the workers of each factory its technical and administrative departments without the least connection with the general industry of the country, except by the way of simultaneous incitement of the workmen against the employers and the engineers as "bourgeoisie."

Of course, such a "control," exercised in the great majority of cases by persons who had not in the slightest degree the tech-

nical or administrative knowledge required to run the given factory or industry, resulted in the breakdown of the factories and workshops, the cessation of work, and unemployment. The consumers were in turn deprived of all the articles and products upon which they depended for their maintenance. As a result, the country, which even in ordinary times could not supply through its own industrial resources sufficient work for the masses of its workmen, remained only with a control over an industry which had practically ceased to exist. These masses of workmen who had responded so warmly to the clarion call of the Bolsheviks, "Take all, at once!" were left without work. Some of them chose to sign up as "Bolsheviks," to enter the ranks of the "Red Guard" for comfortable daily pay and food, but the majority of the workmen, numbering many tens of thousands, who were not quite ready to sell their blood for the doubtful cause of the red gendarmerie, have been left on the brink of starvation.

Thus were fulfilled the Bolsheviks' promises to the workers.

Let us see now what the Bolsheviks did to hasten the calling of the Constituent Assembly, which, according to their statements, the Provisional Government was "sabotaging," i. e., postponing indefinitely, fearing the manifestation of the popular wrath.

To begin with, such a statement sounds strange and quite unexpected from such a source, assuming even that it is made by some honest Bolshevik, and such, though very few and far between, doubtless exist. First, the Provisional Government only once postponed the convocation of the Assembly, and that only because it was absolutely necessary to prepare the election machinery for the Constituent Assembly and to provide it with the maximum of guarantees of fairness and regularity. For that purpose it was necessary to create city and Zemstvo institutions based upon universal suffrage. Again, this agitation was started at the time when the law pertaining to the elections of the Assembly was already adopted by the Provisional Government and even the election days were set, November 12 (25), and the opening time fixed for November 28 (December 11), 1917. Moreover, the electoral campaign had already begun.

We know already how the "fight" of the Bolsheviks for the Constituent Assembly ended. First of all, it degenerated into a fight *against* the Constituent Assembly, an opposition which the people of Russia, though late, finally succeeded in overcoming. Instead of December 11, 1917, the Constituent Assembly met on January 18, 1918. But it was dispersed by Bolshevik bayonets on the very day it assembled, as it did not show any willingness to dance to the fiddling of the Bolsheviks and dared to attempt to express the true will of the people. Similar treatment was accorded by the Bolsheviks and their hirelings, the Red Guards, to the peaceful manifestants who paraded the streets of Petrograd in honor of the Constituent Assembly. They were met by rifle fire and machine guns, and the red banners of the Revolution were wrested from their hands and burned on the streets, a method recalling the blue-coated gendarmes of the Department of Police under the regime of the Tzars.

The members of the Constituent Assembly were subjected to all sorts of violence, and many of these men, whose only misfortune was that they enjoyed the trust of the people, were killed in cold blood. The very idea of the Constituent Assembly, for which generations of Russian revolutionists fought and died, was discarded, and universal, direct, secret and equal suffrage, with guarantees of minority representation, was labeled a "bourgeois relic."

In this manner have the Bolsheviks, who promised the "speediest" summoning of the Constituent Assembly, disposed of the will of the people.

And, lastly, we may briefly refer to another one of their avowals, the defense of Petrograd. Even the Bolsheviks apparently understood that they had no means to defend Petrograd with, and that the task would by far exceed their strength. The four pieces of cannon left in Petrograd after troops and artillery were dispatched to Finland to incite and sustain a rebellion in that land, were quite inadequate for any defense, and Petrograd was left helpless under the threat of capture by the Germans. Regardless of the fact that this situation did not contain an immediate danger for them and their camp followers, the Bolsheviks, nevertheless, thought it best for their safety to fold up

their tents and move to Moscow, taking along with them the Lettish regiments who had left their own country to its fate and gone to serve new masters.

Thus have the Bolsheviki kept faith with the masses of Russia, thus have they kept all the generous promises they made before their November attack—promises which lured to their camp many Russians who expected a hasty, precipitous solution of all ills. To-day the Russian people stand before a broken, empty trough, deceived by those who shouted themselves hoarse about their love for the people and their eagerness to defend all the down-trodden and oppressed.

The eyes of the people are again beginning to see things aright. If it was destined that the peoples of Russia should live through the horror of the rule of the present-day Bolsheviki, we may hope that this lesson will not have been in vain, and that the liberated nationalities of Russia will be more discriminating in the future in the choice of their friends, whom they will weigh in the balance not in accordance with their professions, but by their acts.

The Soviets, Their Rule and Constitution

IMMEDIATELY upon their capture of power in Petrograd, the Bolsheviks, after arresting the members of the Provisional Government, dispersed the Petrograd Municipal Duma, shortly before elected by universal suffrage and containing a majority of Socialists. I emphasize this fact because the Bolsheviks are posing as Socialists, and should have been eager, if that were true, to use the services of a Socialist Duma elected by the universal vote of the population. This, however, was not done accidentally, but in a systematic, premeditated way. Later, in Moscow and in other cities that fell into the hands of the Bolsheviks, they first of all drove out the Municipal Dumas and destroyed all administrative institutions. The Central Executive Committees of the Workmen's and Soldiers' and of the Peasants' Soviets, who had spoken out against the plans of the Petrograd Soviet in November, were also dispersed by bayonets and driven underground, from where they continued to fight for the liberties of the people.*

This, however, did not satisfy the Bolsheviks. Once in the seat of power, assumed under the banner of the "deepening and the development of the Revolution," and pledged to the introduction of Socialism—an order of society committed to the equality of all citizens and inviolability of person—the Bolsheviks began to execute a plan of handpicking the membership of the Soviets, at first carefully, one by one, and later in groups, driving out of the Soviets all elements of opposition. In this man-

*See the interesting report about the stubborn fight waged by the Executive Committee of the Peasants' Soviets, written by the Chairman of this Committee, I. Rakitnikova, appearing in the supplement of John Spargo's book on "Bolshevism," pages 331-334, "How the Russian Peasants Fought for a Constituent Assembly."

ner were the Socialists-Revolutionists and the Social-Democrats Mensheviks eliminated from the Petrograd, Moscow and other Soviets, and later from the Central Executive Committees. The Soviets were gradually turned into Bolshevik tools and all opposition was squelched under threat of application of physical force. In cases where workmen from factories and workshops elected "undesirable" delegates, from the Bolshevik point of view, such elections were simply nullified and the delegates not allowed to take their seats.

Even the non-party Soviets of the first period were far less democratic and a less representative choice of the population than the newly elected Zemstvos and Municipal Councils, and the Soviets were in duty bound to give way to these later bodies, as newer and more democratic organizations. The Soviets, however, controlled by the Bolsheviks, became mere branches of their party organization and, of course, represented only a small fraction of the population, namely, the Bolsheviks, and some shady elements who joined them. So, instead of being ruled by popular, representative government, the country fell under the domination of an oligarchy of the worst type. To be sure, the Bolsheviks lay no claim to expressing the will of the majority of the people, as they regard the universal, direct, equal and secret ballot as a "bourgeois relic" which does not interest them.

For some considerable time the Soviets were functioning without a constitution, and the members gave expression to their desires by a simple showing of hands at open meetings dominated by terror and threats of retribution in case undesirable persons were elected. Only after more than six months had passed, namely on July 10, 1918, did the Fifth Congress of the Soviets adopt a "Constitution of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic" in which the ramifications of the Soviet rule were laid down. In view of the importance of this document it may be well to analyze it in detail.

We shall begin with an outline and description of the voting rights of the citizens of Soviet Russia. Needless to say that universal suffrage, as a "bourgeois prejudice," is rejected, and in its place a special form of voting is adopted which grants the right of participation in the elections of the governing organs of

the State only to certain categories. All others are completely deprived of the vote and the right of being elected.

Here is the full text of the law :

"No. 64. The right to elect and to be elected to the Soviets may be exercised by the following citizens of either sex of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic who have reached, on the day of the balloting, eighteen years of age, irrespective of religion, nationality, habitation, etc.

"a. All who earn their livelihood through productive and socially useful labor and also persons engaged at household work, such as : workmen and employees of all classes and categories ; persons employed in industry, trade, agricultural economy, etc. ; peasants, Cossack land-tillers, and all those who are not using hired labor for the sake of making profit.

"b. Soldiers of the Soviet army and navy.

"c. Citizens who are included in the classes enumerated in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this article, but who have lost, through some cause, capacity for work."

This is the Soviet law which defines the suffrage rights of the citizens. As you may observe, the voting age is not very high, but that, apparently, was not sufficient for the framers of this election law, for in the first note to this article the Bolshevist legislators added the following: "Local Soviets have the right, with the affirmation of the Central authorities, to lower the voting age fixed in this article." In quest of favorable results the Bolsheviki, apparently, are placing high hopes even on children. Therefore, if in the opinion of the local Soviet the adult population of a given locality is not quite favorably inclined to the Bolsheviki and may return delegates of other political beliefs, the local Soviet has only to lower the voting age (the limit of such age is not indicated in the law) and secure the election of its adherents by the votes of children, or perhaps return children as delegates to these Soviets—admittedly, quite a novelty in electoral practice. Another novel point is the fact that in the Russian Soviet Federative Republic electoral rights are extended to "foreigners residing in Russian territory, occupying themselves with labor and belonging to the working class or to the peasantry

which does not exploit hired labor." (Article 20 and note 2 to Article 64.)

We shall now turn our attention to the articles of the Electoral Law which specify the persons who are deprived of electoral rights.

There can be no objection to the exclusion from voting of the feeble-minded or insane, as well as persons punished for venal and heinous crimes (Article 65 ¶¶ E and G). There are other paragraphs in this section of the document, however, that require a more earnest consideration. "Employees and agents of the old police or the special corps of gendarmes and the Secret Service branches" are deprived from the right of voting. This drastic exclusion is likely to provoke some smiling from persons who know. It is an open secret that in the ranks of the Bolsheviki, in the institutions of the Soviet government and even at the very top of the Soviet rule, there are a considerable number of these "men with a past" whom the Soviet government is making use of in its interests. What about such gentlemen, for instance, are they to be deprived of the vote? On the one hand, as ex-gendarmes they are to be excluded from the voters' lists, and on the other, as employees in Soviet institutions, doing "socially-useful" work, they are entitled to vote. Quite a knotty situation, indeed.

"Monks and spiritual servants of churches and religious denominations" are for some inexplicable reason put outside the pale of voters. Next come the following categories: "Persons who resort to hired labor for gainful purposes" (Article 65, Paragraph A); "Persons who live on unearned incomes, such as interest on capital, income from enterprises, rents, etc." (Article 65, Paragraph B); "Private tradesmen, trade and commercial middlemen" (Article 65, Paragraph B). To begin with, in view of the fact that the so-called Soviet Republic is declared a "Socialist Republic," it is reasonable to suppose that the very existence of such categories in such a community is inconsistent and intolerable. Why should these people, people who are using hired labor for profit, people who live by coupon-cutting, commercial agents of all sorts, find place in a Socialist Republic? There is no room for them in such a commonwealth and they

need not be mentioned at all. If, however, our woebegone "socialists" cannot manage the job they claim to have undertaken, and still find it possible to allow the hiring of labor for profit, private commerce and trading brokerage, it stands to reason that the activity of these categories is, at this transitory period, socially useful and that even the Soviet rule cannot get along without it. And if such is the case—we take it that the Soviet rulers would not have tolerated it if it were otherwise—it is apparent that it is absolutely unjust to deprive them of electoral rights, of the right to participate in the moulding of the common life. The only explanation that can be offered for this exclusion is the extreme cowardice of the Soviet rule, which is afraid lest persons opposed to their theories may find their way into influential positions, and, also, that unrelenting vengefulness and hatred which run like a red thread through all the experimental "creativity" of the Bolsheviki.

Let us pass over to the construction of the Soviet rule, as per the "constitution."

At the head of all the representative institutions of the Soviet rule is placed the All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workmen's, Peasants', Cossacks' and Red Army Deputies. This Congress is composed of "representatives of city Soviets on the basis of one deputy for every 25,000 voters, and representatives of gubernia (Province) Soviets on the basis of one deputy for every 125,000 inhabitants" (Article 25). It seems rather strange, unless it is a misprint, that deputies from cities are apportioned on the basis of the voters of a given section, and the gubernia deputies, i. e., in fact the villages, are allotted on the basis of the total number of inhabitants. It is possible, therefore, to state the difference of representation between the city and the village in the following manner: Taking the ordinary family to be of five persons, we find that one deputy is allotted for every 25,000 families. Figuring, again, that the average family has three members of voting age—father, mother and one child (the voting age being 18 years or less)—we find that the representation of the peasant population will be one deputy to each 75,000 voters, i. e., the village representation in the All-Russian Congress will be one-third that of the city. This proportion will

appear still more unfavorable for the village population upon further consideration.

The deputies from the city Soviets to the All-Russian Congress are elected directly and straight from the city Soviets, which represent the populations of the cities. The deputies of the country or village populations are not selected directly by the Soviets of the respective settlements, but by the Gubernia Congress, i. e., through a three-grade system. This will not appear significant until we examine the construction of the Gubernia Soviet Congress as outlined in the Constitution. Article 53, paragraph B, states as follows: "The Gubernia (circuit) Congresses of Soviets are composed of representatives of city Soviets and volost (village district) Congresses on the basis of one deputy for every 10,000 of population and from the cities at the rate of one deputy for every 2,000 voters, but the number shall not exceed 300 for the entire Gubernia (circuit)." We thus see that in these Gubernia Congresses, which are to elect the deputies of the village population to the All-Russian Congress, there are participating not only the local deputies of the village population, but deputies from the cities as well, and in a double proportion at that, i. e., deputies from the city Soviets and deputies elected directly by the city voters. It stands to reason that when these Gubernia Congresses elect deputies to the All-Russian Congress, they will elect representatives not only from the villages and settlements, but also men from the cities, which will still further reduce the proportion of the peasantry's representation in the central organ of the Soviets which decides the fate of all Russia.

We thus see that the electoral law is so framed as to insure for the city population a preponderant representation in comparison with the village population. It was done, obviously, for party purposes, as the village is less inclined to Bolshevism than the population of the cities, and it was deemed expedient to give the peasantry, which makes up 80 per cent of the population of Russia, a weaker representation than the city workmen.

The constitution of Soviet Russia contains no directions as to the technical methods for the purpose of safeguarding the regularity of elections and freedom of expression by the

voters. Only the following few words cover this entire matter: "Elections are to be conducted in accordance with established customs, upon days designated by local Soviets" (Article No. 66).

And that is all. Whether these customs are good or bad, whether they will guarantee the electors freedom of voting or not, or whether these elections may be substituted by some neatly masked appointments by the administrative authorities (such "customs" were known to have happened in the old Tzarist days of ill-repute), nothing is indicated in the law, and, consequently, a wide opportunity and latitude is hereby presented for various manifestations in the voting and the carrying out of the will of the various commissaries and administrators instead of the will of the people. In fact, the elections are conducted everywhere at open meetings by a simple showing of hands.

Aside from unjust and faulty representation, the organization of the Soviets and the Executive Committees is entirely too cumbersome, and keeps thousands of people out of productive employment and constantly on the go from congress to congress and from meeting to meeting. When we consider that the "term of a Soviet deputy's tenure of authority is only three months" we get a complete picture of the constant process of elections and re-elections of deputies. Of course, all this hampers materially the productivity of these Soviets.

Here are the rungs in the Soviet ladder of elections:

Town and Village Soviets

Village district (volost) Soviets and their Executive Committees

County (ooyezd) Soviets and their Executive Committees

Provincial (gubernia) Soviets and their Executive Committees

Territorial Soviets and their Executive Committees

The All-Russian Congress and its Executive Committee.

It will be noted that only the village and the city Soviets are elected directly. All the others are elected through a mixed process, and some receive their mandate through a five-grade sifting.

We have noted above that the main Soviet Congress styles itself the "All-Russian Congress of Workmen's, Peasants', Cossacks' and Red Army Deputies," but, in spite of all investigation, we have not found any indication of the manner of election of deputies from the army to the Soviets, either in the Soviet Constitution or in the decrees about the Red Army at our disposal. It is difficult, therefore, for us to state the proportion of the Red Army deputies in the All-Russian Congress. But, judging by the Soviet leaders' clever manipulations in providing for the preponderant numerical advantage of the city workers over the peasants in the All-Russian Congress, we may rest assured that they have not failed to make the proper provisions for the Red Army, the real mainstay of the so-called Soviet rule.

We see, therefore, that the elections to the Soviet are neither universal, equal, secret nor direct. From this cursory analysis of the construction of the Soviets we may conclude that even without any misuse of authority or invasion of rights, the representative organs of the Soviets are not the expression of the popular will, but the representation of certain privileged classes, the representation of a small minority to the detriment of the overwhelming majority. And as in present-day Soviet Russia the central authorities have adequate possibilities to control the local powers and to rule the entire country even under the general and imperfect laws adopted by them, it goes without saying that party rule is having even fuller sway in Russia to-day than it had in the days of Tzarism.

Who are the “Counter-Revolutionists” in Russia?

QUITE frequently in the American press and in conversation with Americans who have studied Russia for a month or two from a hotel window, the opinion is voiced that the Bolsheviki are the Simon-pure revolutionists of Russia, the vigilant guardians of the true interests of the people, and that they are opposed only by those elements who strive to turn Russia back to her past and to restore autocracy and the privileges which they lost after the Bolshevik coup d'état and rise to power in November, 1917.

This prejudiced and biased view is quite widespread, and it is necessary, in the interests of truth, to combat it. We will attempt, therefore, to draw in brief a general outline of the forces which are arrayed against the Bolsheviki in Russia.

The March Revolution of 1917, as stated already, came to pass practically without bloodshed, and it captured the heart of the world with its charming beauty. With the exception of some bureaucrats and a few conscientious monarchists, upholders of the old order, there were no malcontents in Russia in the early days of the Revolution. In the process of the Revolution, however, the Provisional Government found it necessary to respond to one general demand of the great masses of the people, and the performance of its duty in that direction created a number of malcontents. We speak of the disbanding of the police and the gendarmes.

The hatred of the Russian people for the police, and particularly the gendarmes, is only too well known. Soon after the Revolution insistent demands came from all sides for the dispersal of the police and the gendarmes. This demand had to be complied with, and they were disbanded; and as all of them were ex-soldiers, it was demanded that they be sent to the front. This was also conceded.

This last decision, however, was fatal for the Army. In consequence of this act there appeared at the front and in the rear of the Army the old police and gendarmes who were the enemies of the Provisional Government because it had deprived them of their former places and means of existence. Their attention, naturally, was attracted by the group which raised the banner of struggle against the Provisional Government in the name of a so-called better future; which promised its followers a new, hitherto untried world, and, principally, immediate benefits and wealth; a speedy end to the war, bread to the hungry, the factories to the workers, the land to the peasants, and all of this at once—through confiscation and division.

These banished police and gendarmes were certainly not attracted to this program by the higher motives and strivings of some of the idealists among the Bolsheviki. To them it held out a promise of immediate advantages and, principally, a chance to start a fight against the Provisional Government which had deprived them of their former privileges.

Thus, almost all of the old police and gendarmes joined the Bolsheviki and began to work actively with them. This proved to be of formidable assistance to the Bolsheviki in the early period of their agitation in the Army, both at the front and in the rear. Whenever news was received from the front that this or the other regiment, under the influence of agitation, had refused to obey orders, and that such a decision had been adopted by the regimental committee, these reports invariably brought the information that the chairman of such a regimental committee or his assistant, or its most active member, was either an old gendarme, a policeman or an ex-member of the Okhrana. And this disruptive activity was carried on not by plain soldiers only. Privates and officers alike, who had formerly belonged to the old police and the gendarmes' corps, took part in it.

Who led the troops against Kerensky in the first days of the November Bolshevik usurpation of power? Colonel Valden, the former commander of the Rostov gendarme district. Who commanded the soldiers, incited by the Bolsheviki, against the headquarters of General Dukhonin, who refused to obey the order

of the Bolsheviks to begin armistice negotiations with the Germans? Lieutenant Schneur, an agent-provocateur of the old Government, arrested later by the Bolsheviks themselves.

Who led the army detachments removed by the Bolsheviks from the German front, against the Ukraine, which had a genuinely democratic Government at that time and was straining all its energies to present a fighting front to the Austro-Hungarians? Colonel Muraviev, a Moscow police captain under the Tzar, discharged by the Provisional Government.

We could go on recounting hundreds of names of old servants of the Tzar, true and tried and thoroughly saturated with monarchistic tendencies, who went over to the service of the Bolsheviks and with whom the latter always cooperated.

Thus, the group of Bolsheviks which was seeking to "deepen" the Revolution found its early supporters among an element far away from the Revolution and from Socialism, an element to whom the former regime was not merely an ideal one, but a profitable one as well. We, therefore, do not hesitate to assert that the November upheaval which overturned the revolutionary Government,—a Government which made mistakes, but which, nevertheless, was full of idealism and faith in the invigorating mainsprings of true freedom,—that this upheaval was nothing less than a monarchist-Bolshevist counter-revolution.

We shall now direct our attention to those elements who rose against the Bolshevik domination and who enlisted in the front ranks of the struggle.

Who stood at the head of those who revolted against the usurpers? In Petrograd it was the new City Council composed largely of Socialists and led by Socialists-Revolutionists. This Council, with the veteran Socialist-Revolutionist, Schreider, at its head, came out in defense of Free Russia in the fight for the Constituent Assembly. In Moscow it was also the Socialist City Council, with the veteran Socialists, Minor, Rudnev, and others, that opened the struggle against the usurpers.

The same happened everywhere.

The Central Executive Committee of the All-Russian Soviet of Workmen's Deputies, which protested against the ousting of the Provisional Government, was ordered disbanded. A similar

fate overtook the Central Executive Committee of the All-Russian Soviet of Peasants' Delegates after it joined the fight for the Constituent Assembly through the time-honored revolutionary method of secret congresses and assemblies. This titanic struggle of the Russian peasantry against the new aggressors, who have taken the place of the old Tzarist oppressors, is told graphically by the Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Peasants' Congress, I. Rakitnikova, in her report to the Bureau of the Workers' Internationale, entitled, "How the Russian Peasants Fought for the Constituent Assembly." This very interesting report proves by facts that the Russian peasantry has been opposed to the Bolsheviks from the very outset and that it only gave way to the sheer physical force lodged in the hands of the Bolsheviks. The Russian peasantry has continued incessantly to struggle against them and every issue of the Bolshevik papers (others were soon suppressed within the confines of Great Russia under their domination) has been full of news of peasant uprisings which aim at the overthrowal of the Bolshevik rule.

Workers in numerous factories are likewise continually adopting resolutions against the Bolshevik rule and their system of temporary administration, and this restlessness indicates that the discontent with the Bolsheviks is growing just as strong among the workers, in the ranks of the proletariat in the name of which the Bolsheviks have declared a dictatorship and in whose name they are oppressing the people. Since last summer they have kept in jail an entire convention of workers' representatives of Moscow, among whom there are such prominent revolutionists as L. Freifeld (an old member of the "Narodnaya Volia" of the eighties), A. Troyanovsky (a Social-Democrat and ex-Bolshevik), and many others.

Who of the old revolutionists who survived all the horrors of the autocracy of the Tzar and the rule of the gendarmes is to be found in the ranks of the Bolsheviks? Not Baboushka (Breshkovskaya), nor Tchaikovsky, nor Herman Lopatin, nor Lazarev; not the Central Committee of the Party of Social-Revolutionists, even the left wing of which swung away from the Bolsheviks after the shame of Brest-Litovsk; not the Mensheviks (Social-Democrats); not the Bundists or any others. You

don't find among them the old anarchist, Kropotkin,—in short, hardly anyone who before March, 1917, participated in the Revolutionary Movement. You can't find there anyone who is not allured by pretty phrases not based in fact, and the activities of the Bolsheviki, who are ready to work hand in hand with anyone who professes lip-service to their principles. What if these stray followers are discrediting the professions of those Bolsheviki who still continue to have faith in their own cause,—they worry little about it! They are grist to their mills and that is all they require. They have never inquired about the moral qualifications of their partisans and they do not inquire about it now.

Americans often ask the question: How can it be explained that the Bolsheviki hold power for almost a year and a half? Does not this prove that they are supported by the majority of the people?

For us, Russians, the reply to this question is very simple. The Tzars held power for centuries. Is that proof that their rule was supported by the will of the majority of the people and that it satisfied the wants of the people? Of course, not. They held power by the rule of blood and iron and did not rest at all upon the sympathies of the great masses of the people. The Bolsheviki are retaining their power to-day by the same identical means. And if, in the early period, there were some who had honest delusions about the introduction of a paradise on earth by means of Bolshevism, these delusions have been wiped out by this time. There is nothing but stark, crude force staring them in the face, and to-day all the revolutionary elements are against the Bolshevik government and are making ready to fight it, or are already engaged in the struggle against these new oppressors of Russia who are applying in practice the principles of the old gendarme rule.

Russia of the Tzarist times was governed by blue gendarmes. Great Russia of to-day is ruled by red gendarmes. The distinction is only in color, and perhaps somewhat in methods. The methods of the red gendarmes are more ruthless and cruel than those of the old, blue gendarmes.

But the freedom-loving citizens of Russia and the citizens who struggled against Tzarism are to-day struggling against the

Bolsheviki in the name of Liberty and the People's rule, and, of course, their efforts will be crowned with success. For, while strivings for freedom may be deterred by bayonets, they cannot be stayed or suppressed, even by the use of hired Chinese bayonets, no matter how plentiful!

Russian revolutionists have known how to fight and overcome their oppressors. These Russian revolutionists, the true fighters for the liberties of the people, are to-day being called by some "counter-revolutionists." But it must be remembered that this epithet is being applied to them only by the Bolsheviki, the self-same people who, in November, 1917, in cooperation with the old agents of the Okhrana, brought about their monarchist-Bolshevist counter-revolution.

The Fundamental Causes of the Failure of The Soviet-Bolshevist Rule

AS an adequate reply to the query, why the Bolshevik-Soviet rule has failed, I quote here from an article I wrote last September in a Russian weekly appearing in New York. This article was called "Lenine Is Dead" (Narodnaya Gazeta, Sept. 12, '18), and was written soon after the attempted assassination of Lenine:

"Lenine is dead—Lenine is still alive—such news is constantly appearing in the columns of the press these days. Doubtless a good deal of the information concerning Russia is being made of whole cloth by enterprising correspondents who are ready to wire across all sorts of sensational rumors, particularly when such information suits the tastes and anticipations of the class of readers to whom their organ is catering.

When I took as my title for this article the Stockholm dispatch which appeared in the New York World last Sunday, it was not because I attached any particular significance to that piece of news, which read as follows: 'Travelers who have reached Harapanda from Moscow insist, contrary to official Bolshevik information, that Premier Lenine is dead.' It may be that this information is correct, and, again, it may be false. I am not thinking of physical death when I maintain that Lenine is dead.

The moral death of Lenine, however, is an incontrovertible fact. Only comparatively not so long ago many people, including myself, sincerely regarded Lenine as a fanatic, a bigot, who would not hesitate to sacrifice *himself* for his ideas. At present, however, the number of such simpletons is growing less and less.

Lenine's policies, from the day he and his crew succeeded in usurping power by means of alluring promises and in the name of the interests of the international proletariat, follow two courses. One is the waging of a war against the revolutionary people of Russia who are rising against the usurpers that have coated a

reactionary cause with revolutionary phrases; the other is to oppose Russia's Allies who have come to assist her against the Junkers of Germany, who are still violating our Motherland, not at all in the interests of the International proletariat.

I will treat of both these courses of action later, but meanwhile I will permit myself a brief diversion in connection with one very significant fact. When in October, 1917, the Petrograd Bolshevik Soviet of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies conducted an open agitation in favor of the planned coup, it was an open secret that the engineers of this uprising calculated to simultaneously provoke a revolution in Germany and to cause thereby a termination of the world-wide slaughter. A conference for this purpose was arranged at Stockholm, between the Left Social-Democrats of Germany and the Bolsheviks, who were at that time parading as the Left Wing of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party and were winning adherents under that banner. At this conference the representatives of the German Social-Democratic Left put to the Bolsheviks in a concise and definite manner the following question:

'Do you count, in organizing the overturn, upon us, too, and do you expect to be able to provoke a revolution in Germany as well?'

'Yes,' was the modest reply of the Bolsheviks.

'In that case, don't go ahead with your revolt, because so long as Germany is in a state of war and has to defend herself against almost the entire world, we will not organize a revolution, and, consequently, Germany will not support you at present.'

This was the honest warning given by the Germans of the Left to our so-called Left. Nevertheless, disregarding this clear and faithful statement, our 'Lefts' engineered the overturn and usurped power almost on the eve of the opening of the Constituent Assembly by stealthy promises of a speedy peace to the soldiers and similar allurements to the other elements of the population, to capture their good will and sanction.

When the November 'revolution' took place, it was the 'Leipzig Volkszeitung,' the organ of the Independent Socialists of Germany, that condemned this overturn and even branded its participants as traitors to the cause of the international

proletariat. The "Vowaerts," the organ of the Schneidemanists, on the other hand, praised it. That alone was sufficient to engender doubts as to the revolutionary sincerity of Lenine, who had sanctioned an act so detrimental to the true interests of the peoples of Russia, as well as to the interests of the world-wide proletariat. Lenine knew too well that a revolution on a universal scale was quite impossible at that time.

The consequences surpassed the worst anticipations. Those who had posed as the defenders of the people became the violators of their interests. Hatred became the cornerstone of Lenine's policies and the contemporary rulers of certain parts of Russia are governing only by the fanning and inciting of hate. Little wonder, therefore, that they cannot seriously concern themselves with constructive work and are perforce devoting themselves to destruction, having made of it a cause and an ideal.

In spite of the alluring promises which strongly impressed the imagination of the people before the November coup d'etat, soon after the small Bolshevik party had captured the power, this very people assumed a critical and expectant position awaiting the results of the forthcoming experiments. Fearing the results of this change of attitude, Lenine and his followers immediately launched a regime of terror surpassing anything of its kind practiced by the Government of the Tzars.

The revolutionary people were thereupon compelled to adopt the same measures in the struggle against the November aggressors that they had used against the servants of the Tzar, when Lenine and the Leninists were still revolutionists. A series of terrorist acts directed against members of the so-called Government followed, the most important of which was the attempt on Lenine by the revolutionist, Dora Kaplan. A number of uprisings in numerous and widely scattered localities proved beyond doubt that the cup of the people's patience was full and that the end of Leninism was in sight. When we consider, in addition, that Lenine and his servitors, particularly his chairman of the Moscow 'Extraordinary Commission to Combat the Counter-Revolution,' Peters, are wreaking vengeance on persons absolutely unconnected with any terrorist attempts, and are detaining and shooting hundreds of people as hostages, it becomes clear

to us why the moment of the final crumbling of their moral authority has come and why it can now only be maintained by a system of the most cruel terror.

There are other signs, too. It is well known that the German Junkers are forcibly occupying more and more of Russian territory, and Lenine is doing nothing to halt this German invasion. Once in a while Tchitcherin writes a note to Berlin, which is not even accorded the courtesy of an answer. But no sooner did the Entente, the friends and Allies of the Russian people, who have never recognized the Brest-Litovsk shame, come to our assistance, than Lenine and his collaborators, with signal effrontery, moved against them, i. e., against the Russian people, their hired Bolshevik troops for physical opposition to the "intervention" of our Allies, who have definitely and unequivocally stated that their aims were far removed from any annexationist designs or the encroachment upon Russia's sovereign rights as a State.

Lenine and his followers have even descended to the infamy of attacking the representatives of foreign powers within Russia, violating their ex-territorial rights under the pretense of the shameful and worn-out excuse of searching for "counter-revolutionists,"—an act which was denounced by our Allies as barbarous, practiced only in semi-civilized States in the distant past. The result is that if there were any persons abroad, in Europe and America, who have heretofore given occasional thought to the proposition of recognizing the Lenine regime as the Government of Russia, such thought has now been everywhere abandoned forever.

Thus the moral significance of Lenine has vanished and he is morally dead. To-day, Lenine and his closest fellow-champions are so badly compromised, that when they are ultimately dethroned by the revolutionary people of Russia, they will have neither place nor refuge for themselves, and will wander over the ways and byways of the world with the brand of Cain on them. Berlin will not receive them, for Berlin only has use for them while they are within Russia.

Lenine is dead. He may be a 'living corpse' for a time, but still a corpse. In his death-agony he may yet cause enough misery to our precious Motherland and bring disrepute upon the ideals of Socialism and the Revolution,—perhaps, even at a more intensified tempo than heretofore. These, however, will be the last sacrifices to Leninism that our land will be called upon to make. It will soon be swept away, and only a hideous memory will remain of these days when under the cloak of popular happiness the will of the people and their lives were brutally violated."

This was written by me ten months ago, and I readily subscribe to all of it to-day. It may appear somewhat premature to speak of the causes of the failure of the Bolshevist-Soviet rule when they are still holding out on almost all the internal fronts and are even scoring gains here and there, extending their influence to such parts of Russia as have not heretofore been under their rule, such as the Ukraine. But this apparent success signifies actually nothing. This ceaseless state of warfare in which the Bolsheviki have kept and are keeping Russia since the day they usurped power, under the mask of struggling for peace, is in itself conclusive proof that their hopes are crushed. They cannot pass over to a state of peace, as they have nothing to offer the people in peace times. The premises of their daily activities are based on one cardinal principle: the inciting of hate and malice; hate for the bourgeoisie; malice to the intellectual workers and hatred for the "counter-revolutionists," under which classification they place all the true and tried friends of the people. Such promises are not conducive to constructive work, but tend to demolish life. One cannot create anything upon malice and blind hatred.

In this lies the key to the miscarriages and failures of the Bolsheviki. If they are still supported by a small group of young enthusiasts who are ready to pay with their lives for their rule, and, principally, by a force of armed hirelings and starving men who have to join the Red Army in order to be able to seek bread in other parts of Russia, the circumstances attending the continuation of their rule point out even more strikingly the contradiction between their promise of peace to the entire world

and the sequel to their activities which has brought war, war without end all over Europe.

They are expending all their efforts to provoke in every other country the same social phenomena that landed them in the seat of power, and spare neither energy nor national resources to create circumstances suitable for Bolshevik revolutions in other lands. It is safe to assume that they will fail. The bloody experiment upon Russia, the total destruction and ruination of life, the devouring and extermination of all national stores, is a lesson dearly paid for by the Russian people and cannot pass unnoticed by their neighbors. We thus observe that in Germany, Austria, Hungary and other places where the Bolsheviki have succeeded in causing analogous, so-called communist outbreaks, these attempts have suffered defeat, as if the peoples of the world already understand by sheer intuition, if not by mental calculation, that the Russian experiment in "communism" has led only to the extermination of life and the destruction of all culture created by centuries of labor and effort.

The Bolsheviki have failed to excite a world-wide revolution, the star to which they hitched their chariot, but, instead, have demonstrated the full glory of their social "laboratory" work. As for Russia, the land that is groaning for more than one and a half years under the heel of the Bolsheviki, a yoke which is implicitly being styled a "dictatorship of the proletariat,"—there, in Bolshevisia, life has temporarily just come to a standstill and the people are consuming to the last crumb and shred all that has been accumulated for ages, without producing anything worth while. Therein, of course, is the reason for the wreck of the plans of those Bolsheviki who in November, 1917, overthrew the Provisional Government in the sincere belief that they were accomplishing something useful for the people. (I do not doubt that there were such among them, though very few and far between.)

The recognition of the fact that their plans have gone woefully awry is, no doubt, penetrating the minds and souls of the Bolsheviki themselves. We are constantly learning of late, even through the official Bolshevik press, that Lenine, for instance,

and some of their other leaders, are making departures towards reconciliation and concessions. They, who originally proclaimed the doctrine of the extermination and suppression of the bourgeoisie and the intellectuals, are now, after having destroyed the entire machinery of production and exchange, attempting to establish relations and trading connection with representatives of the foreign bourgeoisie, and in their first creative steps intend to receive the support of their arch-enemies. All this, mind you, after the intellectual forces and the bourgeoisie of entire Russia were pronounced enemies of the people by these very men, and as such were assaulted, crushed and exterminated.

True, at present the Bolsheviks are adopting a policy of conciliation even towards the Russian bourgeoisie and are beginning to make large concessions to them. Only upon one cardinal point the Bolsheviks are, as yet, as unyielding as before—on the summoning of a Constituent Assembly, the fighting issue between them and all those to whom the interests of the people are dear and who see the salvation and the happiness of Russia and its many peoples in the unhampered expression of the will of the people,—in a freely elected Constituent Assembly. The Bolsheviks are fearful of the verdict of the people and are still determined to impose upon them their own will.

Again, it is well to recall that they signalled their entrance into power by a vociferous and solemn refusal to pay Russia's debts. Now, when they see their breakdown close ahead of them, they have loudly, just as loudly as when they bombastically repudiated the national obligations, changed their front and said: "We will pay up all the old obligations, only recognize us as the Government of Russia!" A more cynical reversal of mind can hardly be imagined and it can only be explained by their utter perplexity before the inevitable wreck.

What are then, in the final analysis, the fundamental causes of the collapse of the Soviet-Bolshevist experiment?

In making a brief reply to this question I will, of course, have in mind only such Bolsheviks, who have honestly believed that they were called upon to recreate life and to confer happiness upon the toiling masses and not those of their ilk who have

joined them out of mercenary motives and have occupied themselves from the very start with the gratification of their personal interests and ambitions based upon the "principle" of "Grab, while grabbing is good!"

It is my opinion that the underlying cause of their failure consists in the fact that the Bolsheviki have failed to comprehend the essence of Socialism, that have flattened it out to a maximum degree and have reduced it in its entirety to the level of economics, in complete forgetfulness of the truth that life is complex and cannot be exclusively ramified by economic relations, that "man lives not on bread alone." They have cast aside the entire spiritual and moral side of life as a worthless rag.

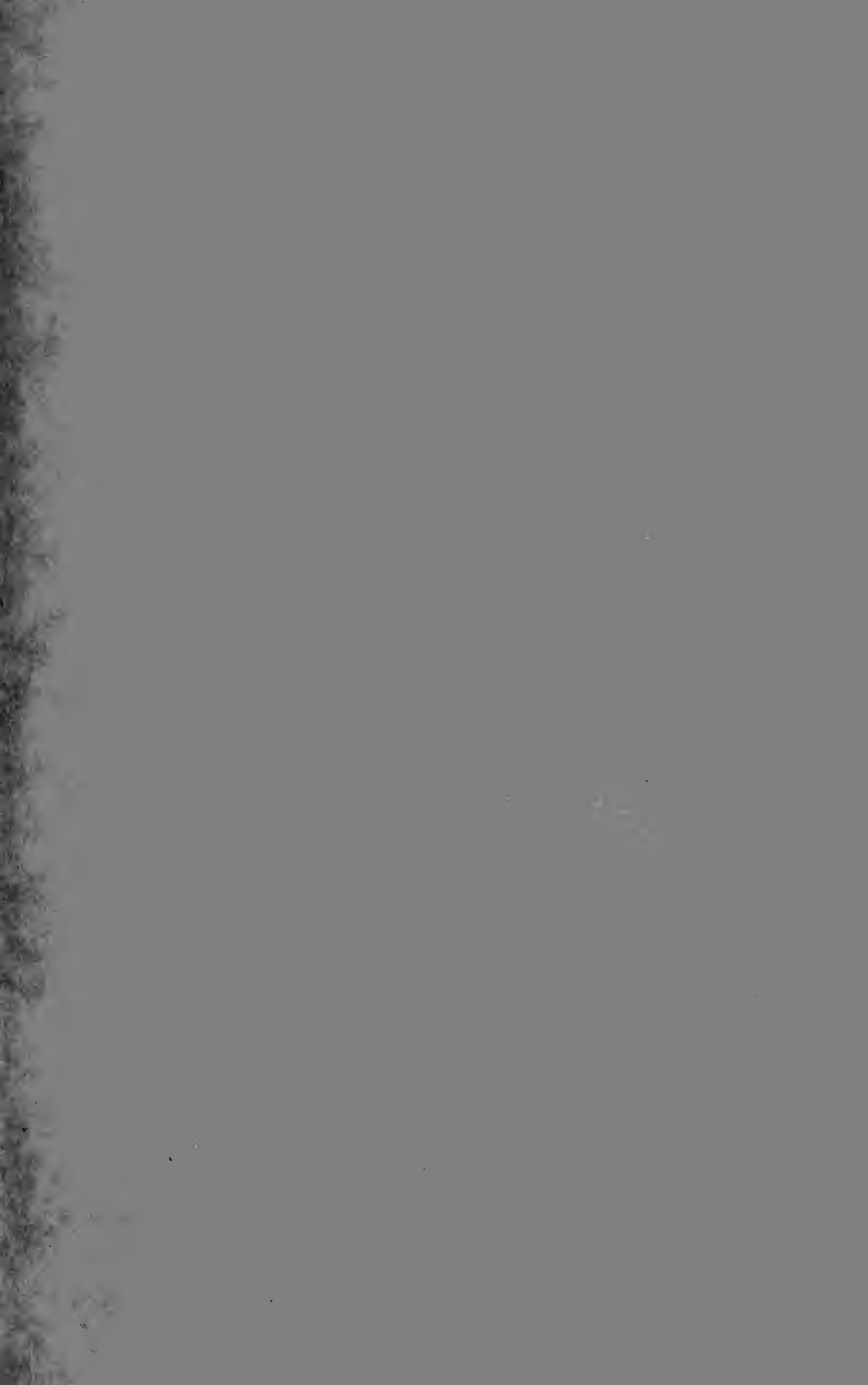
Again, having been nurtured for years in the conceptions and precepts of the class struggle, in the ideas of fight and only fight as a means of breaking down the old regime, they, the Bolsheviki, have left out of sight the basic principle that destruction is not everything in life, and that aside from destroying the old it is necessary to create the new. And the ability for creation lies not in class hatred, but in the feelings of solidarity and mutual cooperation. *Hatred* is a weapon of destruction, and as such it is at times expedient to use it for political purposes, but the creative source of life is *love*, and those who have killed the element of love in their hearts and minds cannot pretend to the role of creators of new life, no matter how sincerely they may believe in their creative mission. This lack of the creative force of love in the ranks of the active Bolsheviki is the basic cause of the failure of their enterprise.

Aside from that, having spent all their lives in the abstract atmosphere of the class struggle, the Bolsheviki could not see the forest for the trees, and failed to notice the entire people for the sake of a class. In striving to rebuild life they have appealed only to a class and not to the entire people with their manysided and variegated interests. Unfortunately, the class to whom they have appealed represents only a minority everywhere in the world, and a very small minority in Russia, and even this minority was not entirely and consciously on the side of the Bolsheviki.

They are ready to make every concession except the convocation of a Constituent Assembly. The very idea of a Constituent Assembly is an emphatic denial of their tendency to impose by force the will of an insignificant minority upon the entire people. But no matter how good the motives and desires of those who wish to impose a dictatorship upon the people, their efforts must of necessity fail, for even in Russia the consciousness is growing that the people themselves are to be the masters of their own destiny, so, irrespective of the altruistic intention of a minority which wants to fasten its doctrines upon an unwilling people, it must result in collapse.

The will of the people cannot be violated by force. The Bolsheviki do not comprehend this, and it has become the principal cause of their undoing.

New York,
May 8, 1919.







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